
Providing Strategic Direction Through Community Criminal Justice Boards

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The Virginia General Assembly mandated the establishment of community criminal justice boards (CCJBs) in §53.1-183 of the Code of Virginia. The law required Community Criminal Justice Boards in all localities with community corrections programs. Originally, CCJBs were created solely to act as advisory boards to their local community corrections programs. Therefore, the directors of the local community corrections offices customarily provided leadership in the creation and organization of the CCJBs. Since their inception, the purpose and scope of responsibilities of CCJBs have significantly expanded, but community-oriented justice has remained a focal point of their efforts.

The Colonial Community Criminal Justice Board (CCCJB), established in 1995, is a regional board serving six localities. The Virginia General Assembly mandated that certain positions—including a general district court judge, a defense attorney, and a chief of police—be represented on all CCJBs. As our board has done, boards may make additional non-mandated appointments. Because we are a multiple-locality-serving board, CCCJB appointments are made proportionately based on each locality's population. Currently, the CCCJB membership includes 23 individuals, representing over 15 agencies in six different localities as well as area citizens.

Profile: Colonial Community Criminal Justice Board, Williamsburg Area, Virginia

Localities served:

Charles City, James City, New Kent, and York Counties
The City of Poquoson
The City of Williamsburg

Partner agencies:

Twenty area justice-related, governmental, and educational agencies and other organizations are direct partners, and an additional eight local, regional, and national organizations are represented on CCCJB committees.

Purpose:

Originally created to advise local community corrections offices. This statutorily-mandated board has also taken a lead role in grant-seeking, research, and communications to benefit partner agencies.

Launched: 1995

Through the appropriation of grant funds, the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services facilitated the creation of Criminal Justice Planner positions for CCJBs. Although the funds were available only for the first 4 years, the CCCJB has maintained its Criminal Justice Planner position through local funding sources.

Leadership and Communication

CCCJB leadership consists of a Chair and Vice Chair. These positions are elected for 1-year terms. Nominations are accepted yearly, and every member of the CCCJB has equal voting power. Our board has three committees (Juvenile Justice Committee, Special Projects Committee, and Substance Abuse

Committee), each of which also includes non-board members. Each committee has a Chair that has been appointed by the CCCJB Chair. There are no term limits for committee chairs. With the assistance of the Criminal Justice Planner, the committees work toward accomplishing the CCCJB's goals, strategies, and objectives as set forth in its Criminal Justice Plan.

Because of the large number of agencies and representatives on the CCCJB, multiple communication tools must be employed to maintain a timely exchange of information. The Criminal Justice Planner coordinates meetings and disseminates information to CCCJB members by email whenever possible. This is the preferred method of communication for CCCJB members as it is cost-effective and requires minimal time. The full CCCJB meets quarterly; the length of the meetings varies, but usually does not exceed 2 ½ hours. The committees meet on a monthly basis or as deemed appropriate by the Chair. Committee meetings range from 1 to 2 hours in length and typically are held during normal business hours.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the CCCJB, as well as of all CCJBs throughout the Commonwealth, are mandated in the Code of Virginia §53.1-185. They include:

- ◆ Advise on the development and operation of local pretrial services and community-based probation programs and services for use by the courts in diverting offenders from local correctional facility placement.
- ◆ Assist community agencies and organizations in establishing and modifying programs and services for offenders on the basis of an objective assessment of the community's needs and resources.
- ◆ Evaluate and monitor community programs, services, and facilities to determine their impact on offenders.
- ◆ Develop and amend a Criminal Justice Plan for the localities served by the CCCJB in accordance with guidelines and standards set forth by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.
- ◆ Review the submission of all criminal justice grants regardless of the source of funding.
- ◆ Facilitate local involvement and flexibility in responding to the problem of crime in the communities served by the board.

The responsibilities set forth by statute are extensive, but the CCJBs are not limited only to those defined duties.

Resources and Accomplishments

The CCCJB uses a variety of resources to carry out its responsibilities. The Criminal Justice Planner position is proportionally funded by the six localities represented on the board. The partner agencies represented on the CCCJB also provide many in-kind resources. Every CCCJB member donates his or her time and expert knowledge. The partner agencies provide time for CCCJB members to participate in CCCJB activities, while the individuals themselves regularly volunteer their personal time to promote the board's mission. Partner agencies provide office space for the Planner and meetings, office supplies, and consulting services. The resources contributed by each partner agency vary; the Criminal Justice Planner is developing a methodology to capture these data.

The CCCJB has also increased resources for the partner agencies through grant-seeking efforts. Some grants secured by the CCCJB include:

- ◆ Williamsburg Community Health Foundation grant (2001) for a cocaine-specific intensive outpatient program for clients from community corrections and state probation;
- ◆ Colonial Capital Kiwanis Grant (2001) for the Virginia Peninsula Regional Jail's "Straight Talk Program" serving at-risk youth;
- ◆ Community Oriented Multidisciplinary Partnership grant (1998) for substance abuse and criminal activity data collection via youth and community surveys;
- ◆ STOP Violence Against Women grants (1996) for law enforcement efforts to combat violence against women;
- ◆ Victims of Crime Act grants (1996) to create a Victim Assistance Director position for Charles City County and New Kent County;

The CCCJB has also undertaken other projects and activities that were not grant-related and which serve as resources for the board and partner agencies.

- ◆ The CCCJB developed a 2-year criminal justice plan outlining goals, strategies, and objectives for the board.
- ◆ A web site developed by the CCCJB describes its organization, purpose, and membership and provides criminal justice information to the public. The web site also serves as a way for citizens to contact the CCCJB. (See http://www.james-city.va.us/resources/communityserv/div_cs_ccc_ccjb.html.)
- ◆ The CCCJB developed inventories and asset maps for criminal justice resources, substance abuse treatment services, and youth services. These

documents have been distributed to all partner agencies and are available to others upon request.

- ◆ A criminal trends report developed in 2001 examined arrest data from 1990 through 1999 for the six localities served by the CCCJB. The purpose of the criminal trends report was to assist the board in its strategic planning process. The report is available through the CCCJB web site.
- ◆ The board also conducted a study of the Virginia Peninsula Regional Jail's weekend jail program and a pilot racial profiling study of the York County's Sheriff's Department.

The contributions of the CCCJB to its local community corrections program, Colonial Community Corrections (CCC), have been extensive. CCC serves as the fiscal agent for the CCCJB through James City County and provides supervision to the Criminal Justice Planner. In turn, the CCCJB has assisted CCC in numerous endeavors. Some projects have included developing a satellite office; implementing a pre-release and post-incarceration program that provides temporary housing, education, and employment services to individuals transitioning from jail; coordinating the development and implementation of free parenting classes for offenders; and conducting a pretrial services needs assessment to determine the need for expanding CCC's services to two additional localities.

Obstacles

As with any regional effort involving multiple agencies, the CCCJB has to address political concerns and deal with turf issues. A major obstacle overcome by the CCCJB was the funding of the Criminal Justice Planner position. When the federal grant funds expired, the CCCJB wanted the six localities they represented to absorb the full cost of the position. The initial position of the localities was that the CCCJB was a state initiative and therefore its staff should be funded by the Commonwealth. The CCCJB contended that its efforts, and therefore the efforts of its staff, directly benefited the localities. As a result of the CCCJB members and staff making numerous presentations and contacting stakeholders in the local governing bodies, the localities fully funded the Criminal Justice Planner position on a year-to-year basis.

Public Participation

As an advisory board, the CCCJB recognizes and responds to the need for public participation and awareness of its efforts. CCCJB membership includes citizen representation. Through its web site, the CCCJB seeks citizen input and comments via e-mail and a citizen survey. The CCCJB also developed an informational brochure, which has been distributed at several local festivals, and is in the process of producing an informational video to be broadcast on the local government channels of all CCCJB-represented localities.

Lessons Learned

Recent changes in the Code of Virginia have required a member of each local governing body to serve on the CCCJB. These new appointees have created a direct line of communication with those making local funding decisions. This change was very important for funding the Criminal Justice Planner position. In addition, the political clout and prestige of these new members have helped facilitate the CCCJB's success. It is important to have membership that represents those from whom you will be making requests. Learning the political inclinations and interpersonal styles of those involved in any collaborative advisory board is imperative.

A final suggestion for success in a collaborative venture is continual planning and evaluation. Strategic planning through committees or a bi-annual retreat, which is done by the CCCJB, is essential for success. A strategic plan assists in providing a time line and sense of direction. And, in order to remain productive, boards need to see what they have accomplished. Annual or semi-annual reviews of the strategic plan and identification of the goals, strategies, and objectives that have been accomplished provide board members with a sense of achievement. Because many collaborative efforts employ volunteers, it is very important to acknowledge and reaffirm the value and purpose of their efforts. ■

For more information:

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